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ABSTRACT

This teaching manual is the second in a series designed for use in bilingual/bicultural programs. This manual outlines some features of culturally democratic educational environments and illustrates ways in which the schools can take positive steps to assure that every child can preserve pride and loyalty toward the culture represented by his family and community. Examples are given of the conflicts that children can experience when schools undermine cultural loyalties, and their consequences, e.g., tensions between parents and children; alienation of children from the school, teachers, and peer groups; and antagonism between school and community. In spite of the diversity in values, there are recurrent themes in what is taken seriously and emphasized in most Mexican American communities. These fall into the categories of identification with family, community, and ethnic group; personalization of interpersonal relationships; status and role definition in family and community; and Mexican Catholic ideology. The manual examines these value areas in detail, and offers a 10-point set of guidelines suggesting ways to create educational environments in which Mexican-American values are afforded dignity and respect. (Author/AM)

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# Mexican American Values and Culturally Democratic Educational Environments

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## FOREWORD

*New Approaches to Bilingual, Bicultural Education* is a series of teacher-training materials developed under an E.S.E.A. Title VII grant for the use of bilingual, bicultural projects. The materials propose a new philosophy of education called "cultural democracy" which recognizes the individuality of both teachers and students. By using the documents and videotapes, teachers and teacher associates can carefully study their own classroom techniques and the learning styles of their students. They then can use their new knowledge in ways which will best serve the needs of individual children.

The manuals in this series were edited by Pam Harper, staff editor, DCBBE. Covers and title pages were designed by Sarah Frey, assistant editor, DCBBE. Requests for information concerning the documents in this series should be addressed to the Dissemination Center for Bilingual Bicultural Education, 6504 Tracor Lane, Austin, Texas 78721. Accompanying videotapes are available from Videodetics, 2121 S. Manchester, Anaheim, California 92802.

Juan D. Solís, Director
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## PREFACE

This "teaching manual" is the second in a series of seven commissioned by the U.S. Office of Education in connection with the Bilingual Education Act (E.S.E.A., Title VII).* The manuals, with accompanying videotapes and self-assessment units, are intended for use in bilingual, bicultural programs. It is envisioned that the materials will provide useful information about the education of culturally diverse children.

The manuals cover a wide range of topics, including educational philosophy, cultural values, learning styles, teaching styles, and curriculum. The three videotapes supplementing each manual review and illustrate subjects presented in the manual. Three self-assessment instruments of a "programmed" nature may be used to conclude the study of each manual. These evaluation instruments are designed both as a review and as a means of emphasizing important concepts.

The manuals, videotapes, and self-assessment units comprise a carefully designed course of study for persons engaged in bilingual, bicultural education. It is our sincere hope that the course of study will prove useful to such persons as they participate in this exciting and promising frontier of education.

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## COMPONENTS OF THE SERIES

## NEW APPROACHES TO BILINGUAL, BICULTURAL EDUCATION

Teacher-Training Manuals — seven individual documents

1. A New Philosophy of Education
2. Mexican American Values and Culturally Democratic Educational Environments
3. Introduction to Cognitive Styles
4. Field Sensitivity and Field Independence in Children
5. Field Sensitive and Field Independent Teaching Strategies
6. Developing Cognitive Flexibility
7. Concepts and Strategies for Teaching the Mexican American Experience

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Includes three self-administered evaluation instruments for each of the seven manuals described above.

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Three videotapes are available for each of the seven manuals described above. Each tape corresponds with a self-assessment unit. Further information regarding videotapes is available from the distributor, Videodetics, 2121 S. Manchester, Anaheim, California 92802.

### NOTE

The components of this series may be used either individually or together. Every effort has been made to develop a flexible set of materials so that projects can choose which components are most helpful to them.

# MEXICAN AMERICAN VALUES AND CULTURALLY DEMOCRATIC EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENTS

> Without sentiment (or values or whatever term one prefers) it is highly unlikely that human society or anything like it would be possible.
>
> —Jerome Bruner

## Introduction

The first manual in this series ("A New Philosophy of Education") dealt with the need for cultural democracy in American education. The strategy suggested for implementing cultural democracy was one of broadening the learning setting to include more than just the values, life styles, and cultural observances of the American middle class. This strategy, then, calls for reversing the current practice of excluding the values and life styles of culturally diverse children from the educational setting.

Our objective in this manual is to begin outlining the features of culturally democratic educational environments. In doing so, we will illustrate ways in which the schools can take positive steps to assure that every child can preserve pride and loyalty toward the culture represented by his family and community. Several examples on the following pages will suggest the conflicts that children experience when schools undermine cultural loyalties. These conflicts have a number of serious consequences, including tensions between parents and children, alienation of children from the school, teachers, and peer groups, and sometimes bitter antagonisms between school and community.

A full appreciation of these conflicts hinges on an understanding of similarities and differences between community and school value systems. The similarities and differences vary from community to community, and even from home to home, depending on the emphasis given to certain values over others. The strength of certain values (which we will discuss as "value clusters") depends on a number of factors which influence the diversity of values among Mexican Americans.

In spite of diversity in values, there are recurrent themes or important continuities in what is taken seriously and emphasized in most Mexican American communities. This manual examines these value areas or clusters in detail, and includes suggestions for creating educational environments in which Mexican American values are afforded dignity and respect.

## Value Conflicts

Cards from the School Situations Picture Stories Technique are viewed by school children who are then asked to tell stories that each picture might illustrate. One Mexican American teenager told the following story to one of the picture cards:

> This is the father and the girl is coming home from school. This is Martha and her dad is angry because when he comes home he wants to find his family at home and Martha always comes late from school and everytime her father asks her what happened she just goes and hides in her room. They never get a chance to be together. After a little while Martha comes out and says she knows she has been annoying her father lately and she will want to communicate more with her father and family. She wants her family to be happy. Her father says, "I've been trying to do this for years, but you have been forgetting I'm the boss of the house."

A young Mexican American student said the following events could have taken place in another of the pictures:

> This is Juan. He is getting to school late one day. The teacher is already talking to the class. He sees him come in and right away asks him how come he is late to school. Juan says, "My parents had to go to Calexico to visit my uncle who is sick, so I had to stay with my brothers and sisters." His teacher says, "That's no excuse. Don't you have any sense of responsibility? How do you expect to graduate? Your parents should know better than to keep you from coming to school." Juan feels real bad and all the kids laugh at him. He thinks the teacher doesn't understand. He just gets embarrassed and runs all the way home.

The first story illustrates conflicts that well-meaning teachers could create unintentionally for Mexican American students. Consider the situation of the student who is asked to stay at school after class hours, whether to help the teacher or to participate in after-school activities. A number of conflicts might follow from such a request. As the girl's story illustrates, tardiness in meeting family obligations could be interpreted by parents as disrespectful or threatening to their authority. Furthermore, parents could interpret the student's behavior as rejection of the family, or as an indication that the child prefers the world of the school to that of the home—an affront to their efforts as parents to provide a satisfying environment or experience for their children. On the other hand, declining a teacher's complimentary request for help would be considered disrespectful, suggesting that the child's family has failed in its responsibility to teach respect for authority. Similarly, declining an invitation to participate in extracurricular activities could be interpreted by classmates as rejection, in turn, leading to rejection of the child by peers.

The second story illustrates conflicts that arise when the separate worlds of school and home actively compete for the child's loyalty. Even persons unfamiliar with Mexican American child-rearing practices can probably guess from the child's story that loyalty to the family is emphasized in the Mexican American home. While educational achievement is stressed, respect for parents and willingness to shoulder home responsibilities are equally important. Loyalty to the family and respect for education (or the teacher) are usually complementary, yet teachers often interpret strong family allegiances of Mexican Americans as incompatible with school success. An unfortunate message soon becomes clear to the Mexican American student: the worlds of school and home are in conflict, each competing for the child's loyalties.

There are many other instances of such conflicts imposed by the school. For example, instructing a Mexican American boy from a traditional home, in which separation of sex roles is clear, to assume the part of a feminine character in a role-playing situation could make him most uncomfortable. Nothing in the child's home life has prepared him for this experience. In fact, he has probably been alerted time and again to the clearly defined range of activities that is appropriate for boys.

Emphasizing competition in which one person wins at the expense of others is similarly inappropriate for children whose families consider it essential to train children to work cooperatively with others and to gain satisfaction from achievement that enhances a close social unit (the family) rather than the individual. In addition, Mexican American culture teaches that "showing up" one's peers is rude and thoughtless.

These examples illustrate how educators, in ignorance of unresolvable value differences, may place students in painful and (to the student) unresolvable conflicts. The teacher who presents the values and life style represented by the school as correct or preferable in essence is asking the child to choose between the two worlds. If the child yields to the message "Abandon your ways and adopt ours," he becomes caught up in a dilemma which a young person cannot be expected to either understand or resolve. The choosing of one alternative as preferable to the other often produces feelings of betrayal or guilt.

At the very least, these conflicts produce a sense of confusion surrounding the discrepancy between what the school labels as good and what the family or community has identified as good. The young child, however, is not able to understand the discrepancy or conflicts as the expression of value differences. He simply senses that something is wrong, that the interpretations of the world that have proved effective in the past are no longer workable.

The inconsistency between home and school affects the child as a vague but nonetheless disturbing assault on his sense of well-being. He will often conclude that there is something wrong with him; after all, the other children seem comfortable and competent in the situation.

Misunderstanding of value differences extends from kindergarten through high school. For example, one of the authors was once approached by a counselor seeking to verify an interpretation she had made concerning the behavior of some Mexican American students who attended the local high school. She was worried about these students because the school was going to require all students to take swimming. She also noted that many Mexican American students refused to shower after gym. The staff of the school wondered about the reluctance to take showers and feared that the "aversion to water" would extend to the swimming pool. In trying to understand this problem, the counselor had finally hit upon a solution: "The parents and grandparents of most of these children had to cross the Rio Grande, a very treacherous river. They must have had some terrible experiences. Since this time, fear of water has been transmitted genetically from one generation to another."

The counselor had no knowledge of the importance attached to modesty in Mexican American culture. Mexican American students would be far more reluctant than the typical Anglo American student to undress and shower in front of others. In addition, it is commonly believed in traditional Mexican American culture that showering shortly after heavy exercise is unhealthy.

This example illustrates one danger of misunderstood or unsuspected value conflicts: culturally naive interpretations of someone's behavior often lead to absurd and potentially insulting conclusions. Frequent encounters with these interpretations lead bicultural groups to view the school as Anglocentric and irrelevant in the extreme.

Value conflicts lead to a number of outcomes, all of which are undesirable. On the one hand, the Mexican American student can become discouraged and reject everything the school has to offer as irrelevant to his past and present needs. Another possibility is that the student will interpret his inability to resolve the conflict between home and school as a measure of his own inadequacy. Whatever the outcome, the source of the problem seems clear: ignorance about cultural values on the part of educators leads to negative judgments and subtle coercive policies concerning behaviors which follow from those values.

**Alternative Interpretations of Value Differences**

Situations such as those described above occur in educational environments which are incompatible with students' life styles and beliefs. Whatever an educator's intentions, these educational environments undermine the child's right to remain identified with his home and community socialization experiences in terms of language, values, and cultural heritage.

It should be obvious that life styles and values do differ from culture to culture, home to home. We emphasize, moreover, that it is neither professional nor culturally democratic for educators to imply, intentionally or otherwise, by omission or statement, that life styles and values differ in status or importance. Rather than judging students' values and life styles, the educator should consider appropriateness of certain behaviors for particular life settings. It is not within the school's legitimate function to decide for the child which life situations are most worthy of preparing for. The philosophy of cultural democracy emphasizes that the child is entitled to prepare himself to function competently in familial, occupational, and social settings which may or may not resemble those familiar to either his parents or his teacher. The educator's role is one of helping students understand which behaviors need to be developed or strengthened to function successfully in particular settings.

To move children in the direction of such flexibility, it is essential that conventional teaching styles and curriculum be modified or broadened to become relevant to all children in the classroom. Teaching styles and curriculum, in other words, would at different times reflect the cultural values and socialization experiences of all groups represented in the classroom. Conflicts would be carefully avoided, and the cultural experience of every child would be accorded respect and understanding.

The remainder of this manual provides an overview of many Mexican American values which should be considered in planning culturally democratic educational environments. We hope that, in reading the manual, the teacher will look for important similarities and differences between his or her own values and those which characterize Mexican American communities. Teachers with whom we have worked almost always report enjoying this exercise. They also report that a better understanding of value differences improves their effectiveness in relating to children who do not share the teacher's cultural heritage.

Specifically, understanding value differences enables teachers to help students recognize their own values and how these differ from the values of other children in the class. This is often a larger task than it initially appears, for life styles and the values underlying them are so often of an "obvious" nature that even young children often experience difficulty in making their values explicit. One student of cultural values has expressed this idea by saying that "Once tested and accepted, these important needs and the means of meeting them become values and tend to be regarded as the natural and even the right way of doing things. Values are so meaningful to those who hold them that they come to be accepted without question."(1)

After children gain an initial understanding of their own values and those of other children, they can begin to experiment with, or "try on," initially unfamiliar communication styles, thinking styles, and social behaviors associated with values other than their own. The noted educator, Jerome Bruner, writes: ". . . we can also let the children enjoy the particulars of a given culture . . . and gain an empathic understanding for alien styles."(2)

Through this process, children can begin to sift through the richness of human diversity and understand the combinations of values, communication styles, and problem solving strategies which are available to them.

**Diversity of Values among Mexican Americans**

Persons who are intimately acquainted with Mexican American communities often comment on the diversity within those communities. One family may have lived in the United States for less than a year while another represents the fifth generation living in one neighborhood. Some families speak Spanish almost exclusively while others prefer to speak English. The traditional Mexican holidays are celebrated in some homes but not others. The extent to which different families adhere to traditional Mexican Catholicism and child-rearing practices also varies. It is important, therefore, to avoid stereotyping Mexican American communities with respect to their value orientations. Even the terms we employ to describe Mexican American value orientations, "traditional," "atraditional," and "dualistic," fail to capture the true diversity likely to be found in any one Mexican American community. On the other hand, the "core" values we describe below are almost always evident in one form or another in Mexican American communities and usually have influences on the thoughts, feelings, and actions of persons in those communities.

**Sources of Diversity**

The sources of diversity among Mexican Americans are many. For one thing the many areas of Mexico from which their ancestors (or they, themselves) originally came differ in important respects from one another. Some areas, such as Mexico City or Guadalajara, are highly urban; others are sparsely populated rural areas. Another important factor contributing to diversity is the extent to which the economy and political structure of a community is controlled by Mexican Americans. When Mexican Americans have a significant measure of control over the community, discrimination and prejudice are minimized. Under these conditions, Mexican American families do not experience the pressures to abandon the values and life styles to the degree that these pressures are experienced in communities dominated by other ethnic groups. In the latter case, Mexican American parents often find it necessary to attempt to gain social acceptance for themselves and their children by adopting the life style of the mainstream American middle class. If this same family lives in close proximity to the Mexican border, however, they are apt to maintain ties with relatives living in Mexico. During visits to Mexico, the parents reaffirm their ties to the culture and, at the same time, familiarize their children with its language and communication styles, heritage, and values

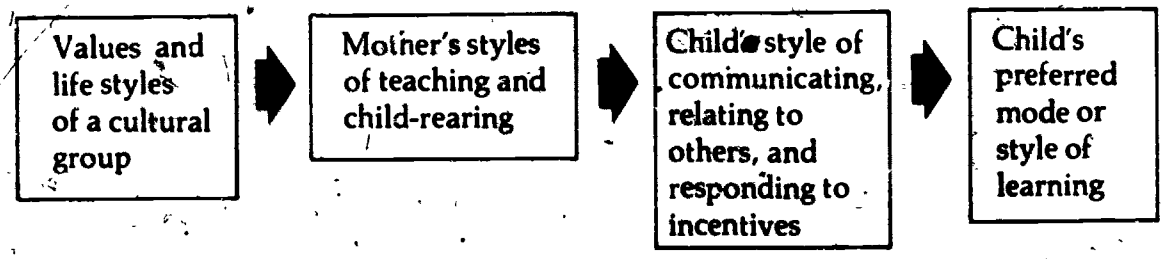
Closely related to these considerations is the extent to which the family has remained identified with Mexican Catholic ideology. American churches which incorporate this ideology do much to maintain loyalty to important features of the Mexican culture (e.g., honoring the Virgin of Guadalupe and using Spanish in church services).

Finally, Mexican American families residing in more rural communities are more likely to have preserved the language, values, and life styles of Mexico. In urban and highly industrialized areas, social and economic forces usually operate to make Mexican American families adopt life styles and values like those of mainstream Anglo American middle class families.

## Importance of Values to Educators

Before beginning a discussion of specific Mexican American values, we think it appropriate to ask a question that many readers may be asking: why should I (or need I) know about the values of my students? The answer is straightforward: what the teacher observes to be a child's preferred mode or style of learning is the product of a logical sequence which can be traced to the values and life styles of a cultural group. Values stressed by a child's parents determine to a large extent how they teach and socialize the child. These experiences, in turn, influence the child's preferred ways of learning and relating to this environment in general. While this sequence may seem unfamiliar to many Americans, it is a commonplace observation in other cultures. The early Greeks, for example, used the word *paideia* to indicate the effect on the individual of the culture's way of educating him.

The following chart (which is presented in greater detail at a later point in the manual) attempts to identify the steps in this sequence. The arrows indicate "leads to" or "promotes the development of."




Understanding the cultural or social context in which learning styles develop gives the teacher a starting point for planning culturally democratic educational environments. By definition, a culturally democratic educational environment incorporates the language, heritage, values, and learning styles familiar to all children into the educational process with equal value and importance.

## Mexican American Value Clusters

There are basically three types of communities in which most Mexican Americans reside. These communities may be designated as traditional, dualistic, or atraditional. Traditional communities are visibly similar to many communities in Mexico, while atraditional communities maintain only superficial ties with Mexican culture. Dualistic communities occupy an intermediate position. Our descriptions deal primarily with the values of the traditional communities, i.e., those which are close to the Mexican border, are rural in character, ethnically homogeneous (most residents are Mexican American), and maintain strong historical attachments to Mexico. Values peculiar to traditional communities appear in the dualistic and atraditional communities but to a lesser degree.

Most Mexican American values can be classified into one of four clusters: (1) identification with family, community, and ethnic group, (2) personalization of interpersonal relationships, (3) status and role definition in family and community, and (4) Mexican Catholic ideology.

### Identification with Family, Community, and Ethnic Group

The traditional Mexican family and community structure develops in the individual a strong sense of identification with, and loyalty to, his family, community, and ethnic group.

Anything the individual does, positive or otherwise, affects the reputation of the family. Beyond this indirect relationship to his immediate family, the individual learns to know, and experience loyalty to, a very large number of blood relatives. Moreover, the history of the individual's community is tied either to his family directly or more generally to his ethnic group. These considerations tend to develop a pervasive sense of relatedness.

Since personal identity is so strongly linked with the family, a motivation to achieve for the family is early developed in the child. This emphasis contrasts with the emphasis given to individual achievement in some other cultures. If this interpretation is correct, Anglo and Mexican American children should differ from one another in their perceptions of who benefits from achievement. One recent study was based on just this idea. Ramírez and Price-Williams(3) asked Anglo and Mexican American children to look at a series of pictures from the School Situations Picture Stories Technique and to make up stories that would describe each picture. The stories were scored first by a system in which points are assigned each time a child's story mentions achievement for the individual. For example, a child would earn one point by saying, "This boy is the best on his team and grows up to be one of the best pitchers in the world." When the stories were scored on the basis of individual achievement themes, the Anglo American children earned higher scores than the Mexican American children.

The researchers then rescored all the children's stories, this time giving credit for any mention of achievement which involved the child's family ("The boy helps his father get the work done so they can go on the train and visit their cousins."). When the stories were scored in this fashion, the Mexican American children were superior to the Anglo American children.

What significance does this research have for educators? For one, we might suspect that Anglo American children feel more "at home" in a classroom which defines achievement almost exclusively in terms of benefit for the individual. This problem could be corrected, partly by emphasizing the significance of the individual's achievement for his family: "This is a very nice picture, Luisa, and I'd like you to take it home and let your parents see what nice work you do." More important than occasional mention of the child's family would be developing a plan to involve the child's family directly in the educational process. Parental involvement strengthens the idea in the child that scholastic success is important to his family. To achieve this end, the teacher can develop curricular materials which the child begins at school, and then completes with his parents and siblings at home. When the worksheet or project is displayed on a classroom wall, the child would experience pride from having been an important part in producing something which brought recognition to his family.

Another strategy for basing education on the family achievement motive is simply to invite Mexican American parents to the classroom. In an initial conference with the parents, the teacher can explore the parents' possible teaching contributions. Many parents are very knowledgeable about art work, dances, folklore, and customs which can become an important part of a heritage curriculum. Working parents can describe their work experiences in a way that directly reinforces familiar concepts. A carpenter, for example, could describe the importance of matching angles in assembling boards. The value of parents' contributions is, then, twofold. The parents can reinforce and enrich the standard curriculum while at the

same time helping the child understand the educational process as something which involves his entire family.

Closely related to the family achievement motive is the more general motive: to achieve through cooperation rather than through competition. The emphasis on cooperation is a logical part of the value attached by Mexican Americans to the family, community, and ethnic group. Within the value framework of traditional Mexican American communities, striving for individual gain is interpreted as selfish. More specifically, competition between individuals is thought to detract from common or shared objectives. The effect of emphasizing this value in socialization practices is readily visible in situations in which children are required to interact either cooperatively or competitively with other children. This assumption formed the basis of a research project conducted by Spencer Kagan and Millard Madsen at U.C.L.A.(4) Kagan and Madsen studied the ways in which Anglo, Mexican American, and Mexican children responded to a task under conditions of cooperation and competition. They found that when rewards could only be achieved through cooperation, Mexican children were the most successful, Mexican Americans next, and Anglos least successful. When children were instructed to compete on the same task, the Anglo children were the most competitive, followed by the Mexican American, and then by the Mexican children. These findings suggest cultural differences in motivational styles which follow from values emphasized in the child-rearing practices of different communities. Anglo children are typically reinforced for competitive behavior, whereas the Mexican American and Mexican cultures tend to reward cooperation. (This should not be interpreted to mean that Mexican and Mexican American children are not competitive, but merely that they are not as competitive as Anglo American children.)

The findings from the two research studies described above help explain why Mexican American children are often described as not being "motivated" or "achievement oriented." Many of these children suppress individual gain in favor of family, community, or peer group gain. Teachers could utilize this characteristic—preference for cooperative achievement—by assigning group projects which require children to work together and share in the achievement of the group.

This preference for the cooperative mode of interacting and achieving is also useful from the standpoint of understanding the spirit of *La Raza* ("the race"). Mexican Americans feel that they are united by a common spiritual bond and have a responsibility to help each other. An immediate implication of this fact for educators is the appropriateness of cross-age teaching for Mexican American children. In this way, older Mexican American children can express their responsibilities by helping teach the younger students.

The ability and willingness to speak Spanish is also considered an important criterion of identity with the ethnic group. For this reason, encouraging Spanish fluency in Mexican American children strengthens their self-respect and sense of honoring the traditions upon which their identity is based. Devaluing Spanish presents both the Spanish language and the Mexican American culture as inferior or unsuitable. This idea may appear rather strange to English-speaking Americans who rarely think in terms of consciously valuing the English language. Yet in the Mexican American culture, much importance is attached to the Spanish language. An assault on the value of the language is, therefore, interpreted as an assault on the very fabric of the culture. Imagine, then, the thoughts of parents visiting schools which

displayed posters proclaiming "Be a good American—speak English all of the time." These flagrant reminders of the exclusionist melting pot philosophy have the effect of openly antagonizing many Mexican American parents and, at the same time, of presenting the Mexican American culture as unworthy of respect and emulation. No wonder the Mexican American student's sense of well-being, based on his preserving an identity with his home, community, and ethnic group, is undermined in many schools.

Personalization of Interpersonal Relationships

Another set of values characterizing traditional Mexican Americans is a strong humanistic orientation to interpersonal relationships. This orientation seems to be a natural outgrowth of the historical kinship and cooperative achievement aspects of relationships common to traditional Mexican American communities. The culture's emphasis on commitment to help others leads to the development of sensitivity to the needs and feelings of other people. This sensitivity is applied to both the verbal and nonverbal aspects of interpersonal relationships. It permits the individual to read and understand another person's feelings without that person's having to express his needs openly. This observation may help explain why Mexican American children seldom ask for help with their school work even though they may be doing poorly; they are accustomed to having others respond to needs expressed in an indirect, nonverbal way. This interpersonal style is often unfamiliar to teachers whose own socialization experiences stressed the importance of "Say what you mean" and "Get it out into the open."

In the traditional Mexican American community, a person who has the capacity to help assumes this role, knowing that he can expect others, in turn, to extend the same courtesy when he is in need of assistance. Thus, children are socialized to be extremely sensitive to the feelings expressed by others so that they can respond to them in an acceptable manner. As a result, they are very aware of their social environment and have also differentiated it (e.g., they have labels for different parts of the social environment). Research(5) has shown, for example, that when asked to free associate to names of friends, Mexican American children not only give more associations, but also give associations which can be classified into more categories, such as physical, social, and intellectual characteristics. One implication is that Mexican American children may do better when the curriculum has human content as opposed to one which is devoid of social, human characteristics.

The highly differentiated humanistic orientation has led to the development of a specialized terminology by Mexican and other Spanish-speaking people in an effort to personalize relationships with others in the community. Traditional Mexican American families include other members of the community as members of their own extended family. For example, two people meeting for the first time may call themselves *primos* (cousins) if they have the same last name but no real blood ties. Similarly, two men who have the same first name refer to each other as *tocayos*. Two men who have married into the same family are called *concuños*, not merely brother-in-laws.

Similarly, the relationship of godparents to children is taken very seriously and is often used to solidify relations with other extended families in the community or with individuals who are good friends. The *padrinos* (godparents) are expected to assume spiritual as well as economic responsibility for their *ahijado* (godchild) in the event that anything happens to the parents. Consequently, *padrinos* are chosen with great care and the honor is accorded to a

responsible and well-established couple. The couple also takes responsibility for helping rear and socialize the child, enhancing and reinforcing the teachings of the parents. In addition, the child develops a close relationship with the *padrinos* so that he will feel free to ask for advice in matters he may not wish to discuss with his parents. Furthermore, he can expect them to act as intermediaries in the event that problems arise in the family.

The parents and godparents of a child become known as *compadres*, the *compadrazgo* (act of establishing the relationship of *compadres*) is the primary way of establishing ties with other extended families and occurs in religious ceremonies such as baptism, confirmation, and marriage.

The significance of close interpersonal relationships based on the extended family is often not appreciated or understood by people brought up in the American middle class family. In the traditional Mexican American community, the extended family is a source of security; the individuals rely on members of the extended family for help, rather than on impersonal institutions. The different emphasis may, as suggested in the stories on pages 3 and 4, lead to unfortunate conflicts between teachers and students.

Relationships between "teachers" and "learners" in traditional Mexican American communities are very close and personalized. The teacher-child relationship is the single most important aspect of the teaching process. Mexican American children come to school expecting to establish close personal relationships with their teachers. The "objectivity" and "impartiality" of many teachers is often interpreted as rejection. Many Mexican American children believe that most Anglo teachers simply do not care about them. The teacher of Mexican American children, therefore, should be child centered. It is appropriate to make frequent use of social rewards which indicate the relationship of the teacher to the student ("It makes me happy to see you do that so well," or "How nice! You did it just the way I asked you to."). This simple strategy can do much to avoid the danger of unintentionally appearing remote and uncaring.

**Status and Role Definition in Family and Community**

Since the extended family is such an important institution in the traditional Mexican American community, many more people have close interpersonal relationships with each other than in the typical middle class family in the United States. The result is that the relative position and function (status and role) of each individual in relation to the other members of the family becomes crucial. In the traditional Mexican family structure it is necessary that every member know his responsibilities to the others, that he know what is expected of him, and what he can expect in return.

Age and sex are important factors in determining what the status and role of each individual will be. For example, older people acquire more status due to their greater experience and knowledge of family and community history. Status is accorded only to those who demonstrate that they have met their responsibilities to their families and community and who may, therefore, command respect from the community at large.

Within the family, older brothers and sisters have greater status and are responsible for the socialization and the safety of younger siblings. Parents command respect from their children but defer to their own parents, as well as to older uncles and aunts. Thus, members of the extended family who show respect for older people and accept their share of responsibility for the well-being of the total family command respect.

Two words in Spanish characterize the main goals of child socialization in traditional

communities— *respeto* (respect) and *bien educado* (well-educated socially). The child is expected to respect the status and feelings of others and to demonstrate acceptable social behavior by assuming the responsibilities of his assigned role. Parents place as much emphasis on social roles and behavior as they do on academic education. They are often confused when school personnel do not seem to understand that a child's duties at home, such as having to stay home to care for younger family members, are just as important as his education at school. The parents may also be concerned when teachers do not emphasize classroom control or do not demand respect from their students. This expectation on the parents' part should not be misunderstood as giving the teacher license to be harsh. In fact, the ideal teacher in the traditional Mexican American community is both nurturant and firm, always showing concern for the well-being of the child. Discipline is maintained without withdrawal of love.

The teaching style which is most characteristic in the traditional Mexican American community is modeling. (Modeling is discussed at length in Manual No. 4 in this series.) The child learns to "Do it like the teacher" and wants to become like the teacher. It is important, then, that the teacher relate personal anecdotes and be willing to interact with the child outside of the classroom. Rewards which are most effective are those which result in a closer relationship between the child and the teacher.

Separation of the sex roles is clearly defined in traditional Mexican American communities. Men are considered to have more status in business and politics, whereas women have more status in religion, child rearing, and health care Although these emphases are undergoing some modification, teachers should be cautious of forcing Mexican American children from traditional families to do tasks or assume roles which contradict the established sex role.

**Identification with Mexican Catholic Ideology.**

Mexican Catholicism is a mestizo religion, representing an amalgamation of Indian and European beliefs and practices. It plays a central role in child socialization by reinforcing many of the values already discussed, particularly identification with family and community (through commitments of baptism and religious training) and ethnic group (through the Virgin of Guadalupe). In keeping with the values of the traditional Mexican American culture, the Mexican Catholic Church emphasizes respect and social education. Spanish is often used for Mass. The priest, moreover, will speak Spanish during home visits. He is also respectful of the social "graces" honored in that community. Thus, the Catholic Church in a traditional Mexican American community serves an essential function in helping to maintain the integrity of the Mexican American culture and its values. Even when all other social and educational institutions appear irrelevant and indifferent, the Church can be relied on to act as a source of support for the community's language, cultural observances, and values.

Identification with Mexican Catholic ideology produces in children a style or temperament that is often misunderstood by teachers as passivity or docility. Teachers, in other words, fail to understand this behavior as appropriate to a value system which emphasizes respect toward authority and convention. Mexican American Catholicism reinforces the family's teaching of respect for convention. For example, disrespect and rebelliousness against the teachings of parents and institutions is considered sinful. Individuals who are disrespectful or who in some other way do not fulfill their obligations and responsibilities often experience a sense of guilt. Thus the second story on page 4 of this manual ends with the boy running away

from the school. The boy apparently senses that he is to blame for the embarrassing confrontation with the teacher. The situation has been structured in such a way that, regardless of whom he chooses to obey, he will be failing to fulfill his responsibilities. A teacher who was familiar with Mexican American values (especially as they are reinforced by the Church) would avoid value conflicts that plunge students into guilt and confusion.

## Conclusion

In the opening pages of this manual, we illustrated some kinds of problems that originate in educational settings as the result of unrecognized value conflicts. As suggested in the stories printed on pages 3 and 4, the conflicts are usually borne by children. The only resolution typically offered by the school is for the child to abandon the values of his family, community, and ethnic group in favor of mainstream American values. Exerting this kind of pressure on children is a long-standing tradition of the cultural-exclusionist philosophy of education discussed in the first manual in this series.

The alternative appropriate to cultural democracy is one of encouraging **biculturalism**. Cultural democracy emphasizes the basic right of the child to develop and maintain an identity based on the socialization experiences of his childhood. At the same time, the schools promote cultural democracy by unobtrusively introducing the child to values and life styles with which he is initially unfamiliar. The ultimate goal is that of engendering flexibility and versatility in children to the point that they can function effectively in cultural and social settings of their own choosing. The broader social goal is preparing children to live in, and give direction to, a world whose fate depends on the wise management and utilization of human diversity.

In subsequent manuals, we will explore many of the specific issues (such as teaching styles and curriculum) that public education confronts in attempting to become culturally democratic. As later manuals will illustrate, the educational issues ultimately center on children's preferred modes of communication; of relating to others; of thinking, remembering, perceiving, and problem solving; and, as well, their preferred reasons for achieving.

As the chart below indicates, each of these four "modes" represents the natural outgrowth of communication styles, human relational styles, learning styles, and motivational styles, which characterize different socialization environments.

| Socialization Practices Emphasize Culturally Distinct Styles or Modes of | Promoting in Children Preferred Styles or Modes of |
|---|---|
| Communication → | Language expression and nonverbal communication |
| Human relations → | Relating to others |
| Cognition (Organizing Information) → | Thinking, remembering, perceiving, and problem solving |
| Motivation → | Reasons for achieving |

In the following two manuals, we will be particularly concerned with relating culturally unique values and parental teaching styles to cognitive styles in children. The conclusions will be essentially similar to the theme we have presented repeatedly throughout the first two manuals: in order to be culturally democratic, educational environments must be structured in such a way that they are consonant with the socialization experiences of a child's home, community, and ethnic group.

The list of "educational implications" which follows represents techniques and strategies that are appropriate for teachers to employ with students who identify with Mexican American values. The recommendations are illustrated with slides and videotaped classroom scenes in the videotapes corresponding to this manual.

## Educational Implications of Mexican American Values

1. Personalize the curriculum: relate personal experiences and interests of the children and yourself to the curriculum. Use personalized rewards which make your relationship with the child closer: "I am proud of you," or "Now that you can read that book, we can both read it together."
   - —Mention personal feelings, your own likes and dislikes, to the children from time to time.
   - —Tell the children things about your own life, show them pictures of your family, have members of your family visit the school.
   - —Take care to know things about the children: their favorite colors or foods, something they like doing, or a visit they enjoy. Compliment them on their appearance, new clothes, etc. Above all, be sensitive to their home backgrounds.
   - —Display photographs of the children in the classroom.
   - —Lesson material should be related to personal experiences whenever possible: math stories can refer to local places; for instance, mention a local store instead of just saying "the store."
   - —Relate feelings mentioned in stories to the children's own feelings.
2. Humanize the curriculum, especially when teaching math and science concepts. (Sesame Street is a useful source for ideas.) Include fantasy and humor in the curriculum. Use puppets and role-playing techniques.
   - —Puppets and felt figure stories can be used for introducing math and science concepts.
   - —Children's worksheets should include items depicting people, animals, faces, etc.
   - —Encourage storytelling by telling stories frequently.
   - —Dramatic situations should be devised in which the child acts as if he is in another situation.
   - —Children should be encouraged to sympathize with each other and with people they hear about in stories ("How do you think Miguelito felt when ... .").
   - —Provide opportunities for the children to tell stories about pictures they draw or paint.
3. Encourage cooperative group work.
   - —Reward instances of helpfulness and consideration you see in the classroom with your approval. For instance, remark on how nice it is to see a child or children helping a new student.
   - —Assign tasks for small groups of children to do together. Friends can cooperate on doing worksheets, measuring, playing games, cleaning up or tidying, delivering messages. Murals and wall charts make good cooperative activities.
   - —Encourage a cooperative attitude about classroom behavior. Point out that good behavior, particularly on the playground or when there is a substitute teacher, reflects on everyone in the room.
   - —Occasionally direct children to each other for help in their classroom work; for instance, they can ask each other how to spell words, how to read words, how to do expanded notations, etc.

4. Arrange the classroom so that it permits maximum adult-child contact.
   - —A classroom with learning centers permits some children to work alone, enabling the teacher to work with small groups or individual children.
   - —Make use of kidney-shaped tables, rugs, and other areas which increase contact with the children.
5. Be sensitive to the child's feelings, remembering that a child-centered approach, rather than a task-centered one, is more effective with most Mexican American children.
   - —Children's contributions should be accepted even if they occur at inopportune moments. If you cannot stop what you are doing to listen to a child, say politely that you will listen as soon as you have a moment, and then make sure that you do so.
   - —Children should be free to express their likes and dislikes about activities in the room. You should be able to say, "I know you don't like doing this, but I want you to do it for a little while. After this, we'll do something that you like." That is, the child might have to do something, but he should not have to pretend he likes it when he doesn't.
   - —Make your feelings, preferences, moods, etc., known to the children from time to time.
   - —Be sensitive to emotional upsets the children may be experiencing, and don't pressure them to perform as usual if you know of or sense some unusual situation.
   - —Take advantage of opportunities to communicate with individual children through meaningful looks, smiles, putting your arm around them.
   - —Provide opportunities for children to work right next to you, particularly when you are reading a story or when they are reading to you.
   - —When children are having a good laugh, do not feel reluctant to share in their laughter.
6. Implement cross-age teaching.
   - —Cross-age cooperation should be planned. Older children should be invited to the room. The children should invite younger children in from time to time or go to younger classrooms to help. Older children should be used as cross-age tutors for a variety of activities (academic subjects, P.E., games, and a puppet theater).
7. Use as much Spanish as possible in the classroom. Try to obtain Spanish-as-a-Second-Language materials for non-Spanish-speaking children.
   - —Use Spanish informally throughout the school day for giving classroom directions, telling stories to Spanish speakers, etc. Use Spanish diminutives and ways of addressing children (Miguelito, *hijo, niña*) and repeat Spanish folk sayings.
   - —Address other adults in Spanish in order to show the children that the language has prestige among adults. Be particularly careful to address outside visitors who know Spanish in this language.
   - —The daily story should often be in Spanish or at least contain some Spanish words and phrases.
   - —The class should learn Spanish songs and rhymes.
   - —All concepts should be presented or reviewed in Spanish.

—Ask the children how to say things in Spanish. Spanish names should be pronounced correctly.

8. Most Mexican American children from traditional communities and children whose families have recently migrated from Mexico need some English-as-a-Second-Language training.
   —Bilingual parents or older children can tutor small English-as-a-Second-Language groups or individual children.
   —English-as-a-Second-Language lessons should include review of concepts a child is learning in Spanish.
9. Introduce Mexican, Mexican American, and Spanish heritage materials and cultural activities into the curriculum.
   —Mention holidays that are celebrated by the local Mexican American community, and hold appropriate celebrations in the classroom.
   —Bring Spanish language magazines, books, comics, and newspapers into the room.
   —Be aware of celebrations that the children in the classroom will know about: confirmations, weddings, etc.
   —Mexican Americans who are prominent in public life—sports figures, people in government, artists—should be featured in lessons and bulletin board displays.
   —Members of the local community should be invited to the classroom.
   —Refer from time to time to the extended family.
   —No child, Mexican American or non-Mexican American, should ever feel that his culture (or family) is not represented. Social studies units should cover topics from the heritage and cultural backgrounds of all the children.
10. Encourage parent involvement and achievement for the family.
   —Parents should be made to feel welcome in the classroom. Have a list of activities and lessons on hand that a visiting parent can conduct. Learn about individual parent's interests and talents so these subjects can be added to classroom activities.
   —Make a point of personally inviting each parent to visit the classroom or participate in classroom activities. (At the same time, care should be taken that a parent who is unable to visit due to work, small children at home, etc., does not feel that he or she is being "pressured.")
   —Send messages to the child's family; and, when possible, speak with his parents, expressing pleasure at his achievements.
   —Remind the child how proud his family will be that he can read, add, subtract, etc.
   —While talking about when the child grows up, mention the child's family; for instance, ask the child how his mother will feel when he graduates, or mention how pleased the family will be when the child is big enough to drive them in the car.
   —Send the child's papers home frequently, reminding the child how pleased his mother will be to see his work. Brief notes should be added to the papers, if possible.
   —Make every effort to meet families personally, and take any opportunity to express appreciation of what the families do for their children.
   —Make wall displays using materials the children have worked on at home with their parents. Also send home work (such as drawings). Sometimes ask the children to bring the work back so that you can put them on the wall.

## FOOTNOTES

(1)Sister Frances J. Woods. *Cultural Values of American Ethnic Groups* New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956, p. 8.

(2)Jerome S. Bruner. *Toward a Theory of Instruction*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1968, p. 90; opening quotation, p. 86.

(3)Douglass Price-Williams and Manuel Ramírez. ***The Relationship of Culture to Educational Attainment.*** Houston, Texas: Center for Research in Social Change and Economic Development, Rice University, 1971.

(4)Spencer Kagan and Millard C. Madsen. "Cooperation and competition of Mexican, Mexican-American, and Anglo-American children of two ages under four instructional sets," *Developmental Psychology*, 1971, 5, pp. 32-39.

(5)Douglass Price-Williams and Manuel Ramírez. ***The Relationship of Culture to Educational Attainment.***